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13

ATIONAL THANKSGIVING SERVICES

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HELD ON

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1865,

IN THE

LL OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

DISCOURSE,

BY REV. C. B. BOYNTON, D.D.,

CHAPLAIN OF THE HOUSE,

AND

STORIC REFERENCES TO THANKSGIVING OCCASIONS

IN

FORMER ERAS OF OUR REPUBLIC.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:
W. H. & O. H. MORRISON.
1865.

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SERMON.

By the President of the United States of America:

A PROCLAMATION.

Whereas it has pleased Almighty God, during the year which is now coming to an end, to relieve our beloved country from the fearful scourge of civil war, and to permit us to secure the blessings of peace, unity and harmony, with a great enlargement of civil liberty;

And whereas our Heavenly Father has also, during the year, graciously averted from us the calamities of foreign war, pestilence and famine, while our granaries are full of the fruits of an abundant season;

And whereas righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach to any people;

Now, therefore, be it known that I, Andrew Johnson, President of the United States, do hereby recommend to the people thereof that they do set apart and observe the first Thursday of December next as a day of national thanksgiving to the Creator of the universe for these great deliverances and blessings.

And I do further recommend that on that occasion the whole people make confession of our national sins against His infinite goodness, and with one heart and one mind imp'ore the Divine guidance in the ways of national virtue and holiness.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington this twenty-eighth day of October, in the year of our
[SEAL.] Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-five, and of the Independence of the United States the ninetieth.

ANDREW JOHNSON.

By the President:

WILLIAM H. SEWARD,
Secretary of State.

In pursuance of the above proclamation, a very large assemblage convened in the Hall of the House of Representatives to commemorate the day. The Speaker of the House, Secretary of the Interior, Members of Congress, officials of the Government, representatives of the military and naval departments, citizens of Washington and from the various States, were present.

Rev. Charles B. Boynton, D. D., chaplain of the House and pastor of the First Congregational church of Washington, assisted by Rev. B. F. Morris, of Cincinnati, Ohio, conducted the services.

The divine blessing was invoked, and the choir and congregation united in singing the lofty and impressive anthem—

Before Jehovah's awful throne,
Ye nations bow with sacred joy;
Know that the Lord is God alone—
He can create, and He destroy.

His sov'reign power, without our aid,
Made us of clay, and form'd us men;
And when like wand'ring sheep we stray'd,
He brought us to His fold again.

We'll crowd Thy gates with thankful songs,
High as the heavens our voices raise;
And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill Thy courts with sounding praise.

Wide as the world is Thy command;
Vast as eternity Thy love;
Firm as a rock Thy truth shall stand,
When rolling years shall cease to move.

Rev. Mr. Morris read appropriate selections from the Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, from an imperial quarto pulpit Bible, presented to Congress in May, 1856, by the American Bible Society, a national institution, for use in public worship at the Capitol, which was acknowledged with thanks on behalf of Congress by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, with the expressed hope "that the great truths contained in that sacred

record may be impressed upon all our minds and hearts." The Scriptural lessons were as follows:

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him."—Ex. xv, 1. 2.

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you."—Le. xxv, 10.

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all His commandments which I command thee this day: that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth; And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way; and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy store-houses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto: and He shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself, as He hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways. And all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee His good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail: and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day to observe and to do them; And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them."—Deut. xxviii 1–14.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried away into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the Holy Place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."—Psalms, xlvi.

"Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it."—Psalms, xc, 15-17.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."—Psalm, cxxxiii.

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though

he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and health, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."—Acts, xvii, 24-26.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."—Eph., iii, 20-21.

Dr. Boynton addressed the throne of Grace, offering thanksgivings to God for all His mercies to us as a nation, especially for the blessing of peace and the preservation of our unity and nationality; and implored the guidance of God to all in authority, His continued benedictions upon the people and nation, and His supporting care and comfort to the brave and disabled heroes who aided to fight the battles and win the victories in the recent great conflict.

The choir and congregation, at the close of the prayer, united in singing the hymn descriptive of the providence and power of God, in war and in peace, which closed with the following stanzas:

Thou good and wise and righteous Lord,
All move subservient to thy will;
And peace and war await thy word,
And thy sublime decrees tulfill.

After which Dr. Boynton delivered the following

DISCOURSE:

Exodus xv, 1, 2.—"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying: I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

"The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation."

This is a part of a song of national thanksgiving, a hymn of praise which swelled over the sea and over the desert, on the morning after that night of wonders and terror, when Israel was delivered and the power of Egypt was broken.

In that awful gorge of the sea, the waves dashing to their side on either hand, the roar of the pursuing army behind, and that great cry, the funeral wail of Egypt, rising inland, a new nation was born.

A herd of slaves had been changed into a people by that terrific midnight baptism, and were consecrated to the great work which was to end in the world's redemption.

Far along the beach lay the long lines of the Egyptian dead, the horse and his rider, and yet Moses and his people, standing amid the corpses of that annihilated army, and knowing—for God had said it—that one lay dead also in every house in Egypt, thought only of triumph and thanksgiving, and the joy of the timbrel and dance.

Nor was this because Moses had the hardened heart of a savage, unmoved by the slaughter which God had wrought, or the cry of Egypt's agony, but all sorrow over the dead was overborne by a feeling still more noble—joy over a great act of public justice done; joy that God had risen to crush the oppressor, and vindicate the right; joy that a nation was born; joy that God had given peace to Israel, not by pardoning Egypt, but by her public execution, in order that the nations might be warned, and law and justice be honored.

We, too, have come to a similar hour. We stand this day on the shore of deliverance, but we have passed through a sea redder, far, than that of Egypt—a sea of real blood and tears.

Not for a few hours, but for four years, we have been marching through, splashed with the blood of our bravest and the tears of true-hearted and broken hearted thousands; and to-day this American people, standing amid five hundred thousand graves, with millions of mourners and thousands of maimed and crippled men, the relics of the fight, rises above the greatness of its sorrow, and raises to God its thanks and its praises, that a great wrong has been trampled down; that the right has been vindicated towards God and man, and that we stand before the world to-day a new born, free, American nation, over which floats the old flag, dearer now than ever, not one star eclipsed, and its glorious beauty to be stained no more with the blood and tears of a slave.

Should this day be observed according to the most appropriate recommendation of our Chief Magistrate, it will be one of the most illustrious days of our national life, a luminous point in American history. We have had national thanksgivings before, so generally observed that the voice of song and praise, rising in the morning by the shore of the Atlantic, followed the sunbeams across the continent with an unbroken melody, till the last hymns of the day floated out from the sea still westward from California and Oregon.

Many times has God granted us great and peculiar mercies, saving us alike from our own folly and the power of our foes, but never be

fore has this nation, nor, as it seems to me, any other people, received at once so many right royal gifts as those which we acknowledge to-day.

Successful on every line of effort, and all these tending towards one point, we have reached the grand result, we have received for all efforts the crowning mercy; God places to-day on the head of this new nation a coronal of blessings, sparkling with such gifts of love as are worthy of the power, the wealth, the liberality of Christ Jesus the Lord. When men wish to convey the highest possible conception of the value of a gift, they say it is an imperial present, but we rise far above this thought, and say, ours are Christ-like mercies.

I propose to dwell separately upon some of the most important of these good gifts of God.

The first point to which the President directs our attention, and to which all naturally turn, is that God has granted us once more the blessings of peace.

The manner in which peace returned is one of the marvels of history.

A few weeks since the continent bristled with the arms of nearly a million and a half of soldiers, shaking the solid land with the tramp of their march and the shock of their battle. Over the land and along the sea, lay the heavy battle-cloud, reddening with the artillery's flame, and fainter flash of musketry, while every discharge made gaps in the family circle and laid on living hearts a weight heavier than the clods on the grave.

How quickly, as if some spell-word of more than human power had been spoken, this tragedy of death was ended! Over all the wide battle-fields there was sudden silence, the armies mingled and exchanged friendly greetings, and in a few days all these weapons were standing harmless in arsenals or private homes, the thundering ships were moored and silent in peaceful harbors, and a million of men had mingled with and become a part of the general mass of society, as gently as so many water drops would have melted into the ocean.

The value of this blessing of peace must be measured by the greatness of the previous battle, the interest which it involved and the perils which it brought. If we can measure these we can also estimate this gift of peace, for which the thanks of a nation are being offered to-day. Let us think, then, for a moment, upon the magnitude of this war. Such battle lines as we stretched across a continent, the world never saw before. They reached that double line of men and horses, and gleaming steel, and hostile banners, and batteries, and forts, and deadly rifle-pits, from Gettysburg far beyond the Mississippi. Follow them from Pennsylvania through Western Virginia, through Kentucky to the Mississippi, and then westward to where Lyon fell, a thousand miles of battle; trace it then up and down the Mississippi to New Orleans, up the Cumberland and Tennessee to the Virginia line; trace it along the Potomac, along the coast, and on the sea three thousand miles, to Florida, to Texas, to the Rio Grande; almost one line of flashing guns. Follow it down from Louisville to Chattanooga, Chicamauga, Mission Ridge; trace it on to Atlanta, from Atlanta to Savannah, from Savannah eastward to North Carolina; then, lastly, begin at this city and follow along that highway of death and shame that McClellan marched over, and then trace the bloody track along where Grant proposed to fight it out, and did fight it out, and fight it down. Think how, on all these lines of battle, the land, the rivers, the ocean have been crimsoned with the blood of Americans. Think of the crowded grave-yards around every hospital; think of the sixty-four thousand murdered, starved, poisoned in those Southern prisons; think of those horrors at which the savage is amazed, by which human nature was disgraced, and by which devils confess themselves out-done. Sixty-four thousand murdered! Think of them, starved into idiocy, staring at you with their rayless eyes; look at them,—an army of skeletons, and hark to the cry of blood, the cry for justice rising from their graves. What have we to answer? We have hung one poor, miserable subordinate, whose death produced no more moral influence than the crushing of a fly would have done, while every leader and instigator of these horrors walks as yet unharmed, and sixty thousand graves of the brave, true-hearted are crying out against us in the ear of God. I do not thank God for this.

Again, in order to value peace as we ought, we must consider the effect produced upon a great nation by suddenly arresting on all sides the usual pursuits of life, and directing all the energies of the Government, the capital, the mechanical skill, the producing and thinking power of the nation, to organize and carry on so great and so fierce a war.

From every rank and every condition of life

we drew out our workers and thinkers, the strong in body, the clear-headed, brave-hearted men, and sent them by the hundred thousand to the camp and the battle. North and South, we probably drew out two millions such, and whatever power these millions represented was withdrawn from the industry of the country.

Nor was this by any means all. Thousands of our most skilful workers, all over the country, were obliged to abandon their usual pursuits; and in order to meet the demands of war, the capital and machinery and the skilled labor that had been producing the wealth of the nation, were turned to the manufacture of muskets and cannon and war ships, and all the terrible enginery of battle, and probably five thousand millions of the wealth of the land was consumed in the fiery strife.

This will enable us to estimate more truly than we otherwise could, the blessings of the power which restores the capital of the land to its proper uses, and brings back our mechanics and our multitudinous machinery to the productions of peace; which brings from the camps and battle-fields a million of men to add their energies to our productive industry; which calls home our merchant steamers from the fight and the blockade, and re-converts them into the agents of a peaceful commerce.

With the return of peace, time, the healer and restorer, is softening away the horrors of the fight. The blood-stains have vanished from the field and from the slippery deck; the skeletons have mouldered away or been buried out of sight; the bare and harsh repulsiveness of our heroes' graves is smoothed away, and earth is busy, with gentle care, in filling up and healing the gashes which the trenches and rifle-pits made in her bosom; and over the mounds of the fortifications, and over the graves, she is weaving the covering grasses and decking them with flowers. The mourners are wiping their tears away, and time and distance have veiled already somewhat the terribleness of the death scenes and of the first hours of bereavement, and the sorrow of the nation serves now only to chasten and ennoble. Thus we may measure the worth of this peace which God has given by the magnitude and slaughter of the previous battle, and by the peril which it brought to every great interest of the land—a danger so great that England and France rejoiced as if the ruin of the Republic were already wrought; and even in our own eyes the life of the nation was for a time hanging in doubt.

In view of this great deliverance, this saving alike from our own mistakes and follies, as well as from the wrath of traitors, this nation may well exclaim, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

Again: We should thank God that the nation, instead of being weakened and corrupted, has come forth from the war stronger, nobler, more heroic than before.

The war has left the South alike a material ruin and a moral wreck. The ghastly emptiness, the black desolation of their land, filled only with scorched ruins, and graves, and dead men's bones, fitly represent the general state of the Southern mind and heart.

The South entered into the war as if there were no God and no eternal principles of right or wrong, as if greatness had no connection with the right and true. She did not know that no great and noble thing ever was, or will be, or can be done, in defence of a foul and evident wrong. She went into the battle to maintain iniquity, and she fought under the inspiration of passion instead of principle. Those Southern leaders seemed to think that they could kindle every evil passion; that they could, as the Apostle says, set the soul on fire of hell, and yet the soul not be consumed. They thought they could scalp a Yankee and drink out of his skull, and make trinkets of his bones, and not become savages themselves; they thought they could murder and torture and starve defenceless prisoners, and set about generally a devil's work, and not become devils themselves.

They have, through an inevitable moral law, reaped the fruit of their doings. They have paid the penalty of one of the most fearful crimes of earth. They took religion and public faith and honor, and all the forces of society, and all the energies of the individual, and pressed them by force into the service of a foul iniquity, and, as God could not be safely defied, nor the soul He has made be outraged with impunity, the Southern character has collapsed, and there remains only the ruins of humanity, souls burned up with passion—the ashes and cinders of the extinct volcano.

For the present, the South must remain incapable of an heroic action or a great idea. The statesman may reconstruct the forms of the State, but to reconstruct a ruined soul is beyond his art. The South has committed suicide upon her moral nature, and she must abide the result.

So long as the South feels no repentance for her crime, and only regrets that she did not succeed; so long as her chief thought is to glorify and place in office those who have been leaders in this bloody iniquity, she cannot be recovered, she will sink lower and lower. She may produce cunning intriguers, wire-working politicians, or a fresh brood of conspirators, but with all this she will remain incapable of a noble thing; she will have no recovering life-power, no true manhood, because she rejects the right and the true, and obstinately clings to evil; and if she persists she will certainly perish and disappear, and that beautiful land will be recovered by the power of the Northern life. The only choice which God has left the South is, to repent or perish. The North, on the contrary, has been made purer, stronger, nobler by the war. We, too, were in imminent danger at the outset, of being ruined for the lack of moral principle. When our leaders were trying all possible methods of conciliating traitors; when they set the mere political Union above justice, above human rights, and even the Law of God, we stood on the verge of destruction, because we were sapping the moral power of the nation, and because without an underlying moral principle and a sustaining moral force, no cause can be great or successful. We were sinking into the inaction and torpor which mark the decay of moral power and spiritual life, when God in mercy started the whole nation with the thunder of the cannon at Sumter. It seems to me that the magnificent outburst of holy wrath, that spiritual lightning flash of patriotic fire which followed the attack, was an inspiration from Heaven. The North seemed to awake as under the breath of the Almighty. The first thrill of that new life went through all true hearts, and starting with its first throb, the North awoke to a new existence. She became capable of a great war and a great success. She put on strength from God. As the contest went on, three great ideas gradually were revealed to the Northern mind: The idea of delivering American Christianity from all complicity with our national sins; the idea of lifting four millions among us from brutehood to manhood; and the idea of one great, free, American nation consecrated to God and humanity.

The moment the North accepted these ideas as the elements of the fight, she was irresistible. She was armed with the might of God, and success was sure. Her armies fought not alone under the stripes and stars, but under the banner of Christ. All that was best in human character was quickened under this inspiration of the right; time, money, life, all holy effort, all noble sacrifice, were at the service of the Government, and while the miserable traitor wriggled up and struck at the patriot's heel, he bruised to death the head of the Southern dragon.

It was a noble victory for Christ and humanity, and such a fight and such a victory have filled us with grander thoughts and nobler aspirations, and we stand this day mighty among the mightiest, with more power of great conception, with more ability to dare and do, than any other nation of earth. Let us thank God that our war was fought for principle, for righteousness and truth, for the rights of man and the glory of God.

The nation should come to Christ our King with thank offerings to-day, because He brought us into strait places, and through failures and defeat forced upon us the conviction that we must deliver the slaves or perish ourselves.

It is thought by many that this is an obsolete subject, belonging to the past alone, having no connection with any living issue of the times.

This is contrary to the philosophy of the Bible. Moses, and the prophets after him, took frequent occasion in public to go over the history of the past, and to remind the people of their sins of former years, and the punishment inflicted, that they might be humble and fear the judgments of the Lord. This nation has been convicted of a great military necessity, but we are not, as a whole, convinced of the sin of slavery.

We were compelled to do an act which has made our age and country historic and illustrious. We took four millions whose names had been striken off from the roll of our race, and reinvested them with a legal humanity. They had been changed by the infernal sorcery of wicked law into things, into brutes. Helpless and tormented, they groaned in vain, till Abraham Lincoln, inspired of God for this great deed, and compelled by the perils of the hour, uttered that counter-spell of deliverance, by which this herd of human cattle were disenchanted, and they arose and stood among us in the similitude of men.

I say in the similitude of men because as yet we refuse them the rights and privileges, the position, the respect, and the Christ-like cherishing which are due to our common humanity.

We cannot rid ourselves of this question of slavery because to save ourselves from ruin, we granted a dead form of freedom to the blacks; it will confront us, a living issue, fraught with the old perils, until we have granted to the negro that measure of rights which shall satisfy the infinite justice of God.

The negroes have toiled for us two hundred years, producing a large portion of our wealth, and have been refused all adequate compensation; they have proved faithful when all around were traitors; they rendered all possible loving, brave, true-hearted service to our soldiers, and their loyal blood, freely shed, was a part of the price of our safety, and these claims are all filed against us in that High Court where He presides who is Judge over all the earth. In that court Christ is the negroes' Advocate, and God the Judge; and that cause will never be dismissed until the debt is paid, even to the uttermost farthing. [Applause.]

[The speaker, when the applause had subsided, remarked that however gratifying such tokens of approval were, they seemed to him somewhat inappropriate upon such an occasion, and that the audience would confer a favor upon him by refraining from any applause.]

Unless God was wrong in reminding the Israelites of their past sins in order that his forgiving mercy might be seen, it would be well for us to consider a moment our great sin, that the grace of God in sparing us may increase our gratitude and love.

There were four millions of God's creatures upon whom he had set his own seal as evidence that they were men, and we refused to recognize the sign-manual of Jehovah, we denied their manhood and expunged them from the records of the race.

We violated, in regard to them, every commandment of Christ, their King and our King, and we subverted for them every civil right and every social institution. Think of four millions of men and women to whom we refused all wages for severest toil; four millions who had not one dollar of legal property, nor a proper family, nor a true home, nor a wife that the man could call his own, nor a lawful child, nor a husband that could be protected in his rights —a mere herd of human brutes in the eye of the law, without even a family name, known only as Pomp or Caesar, as dogs and cattle are.

When we think that the eye of a just and a pure God looked over this shocking outrage upon humanity, that He saw the scourgings and the torturings, the blood and the tears, and that night and day the heart-broken wail of these millions smote on the ear of Jesus, is it surprising that a just God should demand our tears, and our blood, and our treasure? Is it surprising that He should shake, in His wrath, political structures that sheltered such iniquity; and has not God magnified the riches of His grace that we are not consumed, but stand to-day with thanksgivings for this peace?

We have given the slave the form of freedom. Will we give to that form a reality and a life? Will we treat the delivered slave as a man? I thank God for every indication that the nation is preparing itself for this proof of its nobleness; and when we are ready to reinvest the black man with every right and privilege that belongs to a proper manhood, then—but also not till then—will God's controversy with this nation be ended, and we shall have peace indeed. The future of the nation hinges on the one question, whether we will abolish, not only slavery, but every trace of serfdom, and declare all men equal in right and privilege before the law and God.

We should be thankful to God because He baffled the plot which was formed against us in Europe.

With the evidence now before us, no candid man can doubt that the conspiracy against our Republic extended to Europe, and that the foreign branch was more formidable than that on our own soil. The plot was prepared with as much care in France and England as in the Southern States. The European part of it was ready quite as soon as their accomplices here. When the moment arrived, France and England, by proclamation, and according to previous agreement, lifted the traitors to the position of lawful belligerents. France started for Mexico to reinstate the Latin power on this continent, Spain undertook to recover her American possessions, and England was on hand to aid in crippling a commercial and manufacturing rival, and gratify her jealousy of the United States, and get ready her Alabamas, and swift steamers to run the blockade. Nothing saved us at the outset from more active interference, but the perfect confidence of France and England that our ruin was sure through what had been done already. They watched and waited for our destruction in vain; but they thought it certain. They were ready to strike, but thought the blow not needed.

God was preparing, unseen, such a change in

the aspect of the fight as no human sagacity could foresee. The proudest hour the traitors ever saw—the blackest night that ever fell upon our cause—was when the iron monster crushed up the Cumberland and Congress as if they were eggshells, and then passed unharmed to her harbor, ready to complete, in the morning, the ruin of our fleet. Through those sad night-watches God guarded and guided the course of a strange avenger. The Lord's deliverer was punctual to the hour. In the morning this nondescript iron stripling went forth to attack the iron Goliath of the sea. It was one of those great occasions which close up eras and change the aspects of the world. When the five hours' fight was over, and the beaten giant retreated disabled, the naval supremacy of France and England was annihilated; their vast wooden navies could no longer command the seas. The *Times* said the British navy consisted of but four ships—her iron-clads. The question of intervention was settled; for neither England nor France had then a ship that they would dare match against the little Monitor.

In that little vessel was the germ of those formidable ships constructed since, which are an overmatch for anything which Europe can bring to our shores, and to these fresh creations of American genius, to the new and formidable character of our guns, to the navy, as a whole, we owe our freedom from intervention hitherto, and our security for the future. If, as the prophet declares, the Lord has taught man how to plow and sow and thresh his grain, may we not believe that the ideas out of which our national defences have sprung were an inspiration from Him, and designed to save us from our foes?

I cannot but think that the Northern mind has worked during the war under the special direction of God, and in nothing more clearly than in the American navy, which presents to-day a barrier to Europe which all her fleets cannot penetrate.

We may be thankful that the true spirit and aims of the South have been revealed before they had fully regained their political power.

At the beginning of the rebellion we were brought to the verge of ruin, because, in spite of every kind of the most positive evidence, we refused to believe that the Southern leaders were really traitors, bent on separation and war. And now we were about to put in imminent peril all for which we paid this fearful price of blood, and tears, and treasure, because men were determined to believe that the South was not only beaten, but convinced of, and penitent for, her wrong, and would now adopt the principles and institutions of the North. But God, who has saved us so often in spite of ourselves, has interposed once more. The hand of the Lord has drawn the veil aside, and no one now need mistake the spirit or the aims of the South.

It is with sorrow and disappointment that we are forced to believe that, with so few exceptions as not to affect the general result, the spirit of the South to-day is what it was during the war, but intensified by the mortification of defeat. And this bitter feeling is cherished not only toward the conquering North, but towards the almost defenceless blacks, who not only escaped from their grasp, but whose loyal hearts and desperate fighting contributed so largely to their overthrow. Whoever has marked the ferocious passion with which the war on their part was conducted, will see that it would require a greater miracle than was ever wrought on human thought and feeling to produce so suddenly any friendly feeling towards those whom they have hated and scorned so long, and by whom they were conquered at last. We regret that such is the spirit of the South, but we must deal with facts as they are.

Again, no one need mistake the purposes of the South. They are willing to abolish the name and form of slavery if they can retain the control of the blacks through their local laws, because they gain some twelve members of Congress by this nominal freedom, while the degradation of the blacks will be as complete as before. There is nowhere an indication of willingness to yield to the black race the rights and privileges of a proper manhood. If the great estates are restored to the rebel owners, the landed aristocracy will hold both black and white laborers in the condition of serfs, while they will gain largely in political power by granting the worthless *forms* of freedom to the slave.

The original theory of State sovereignty is held as firmly as ever, nor is the main purpose of the rebellion abandoned.

With the aid of their Northern allies, and the added twelve new members of their own, they expect to win on the political field what they lost by the appeal to arms.

By this revealing of the Southern spirit we are brought face to face with some most solemn questions, and we should thank God that they are raised in time to enable us to decide them aright.

Can we afford, by the wholesale pardon of these plotters and leaders of sedition, by the restoration of their property and their political rights, to declare, virtually, that they have done nothing worthy of punishment, and thus admit their plea that they owed allegiance to their States, and of course secession was neither treason nor rebellion?

There is no other ground whatever on which pardon, as the rule, can be justified.

It is said that a great and victorious people can afford to be magnanimous, and forgive even treason.

But no state, however powerful, can afford to bring public law into contempt, to set aside the penalty of crime, and abolish the distinction between right and wrong, and thus subvert the very foundation on which society rests.

Much less can a state afford to reward an open iniquity, so that even rebellion shall command a premium.

The mercy of God is infinite. His compassions fail not. Love is the sum and essence of his character. God is love. Yet, in all the history of the universe, there is not an instance where mercy interfered with justice; there is not a case of forgiveness unless in some manner the law was first vindicated. He could not forgive a single sinner until the law was honored by the the death of Christ. Christ sets forth in the most solemn manner the inviolability of law when he says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one jot or tittle of the law shall fail."

God could create a universe with a word, but should one stain of injustice fasten on His throne, by one act of forgiveness over-riding justice, even Infinite Power and Infinite Wisdom could not repair the wrong.

Suppose that God should pardon, in violation of law, the fallen angels, restore to them their former power and rank and privilege, and should then refuse to the loyal angels their proper reward and honor: it would annihilate the moral basis of His throne.

Can we afford, then, or will we dare, to put pardons in the hands that yet drip with the blood of our slain; shall we give back to the unrepentant rebels property, power and honor, while we deny all proper right and privilege to those whose steadfast hearts were true in all our hours of darkness and strife, and who, by the terrible ordeal of battle, have proved both their loyalty and their manhood, and have fairly purchased the rights of citizenship with the price of blood? Dare we present ourselves before either God or the nations after having committed an outrage against God by rejecting the principles upon which He declares His universe shall be governed, in claiming that traitors may strike at the life of a nation, throw into confusion the whole order of society, endanger all the interests of thirty millions of people, slaughter in the battle and by every other horrid form of death nearly a million of men, till a wail like that of smitten Egypt went up from all the land, and yet no crime be committed that demands a punishment—that such acts, upon which God himself has set damnation's seal, are even worthy of reward?

Could we face the wrath of God or the scorn of the world if we prove in any degree false to the spirit and intent of the promises by which we secured the aid of the blacks and changed the aspect of the war? We know full well that the proclamation of freedom and the urgent invitation to join our armies, by every rule of honorable dealing and fair interpretation, carried with them the promise and the obligation to bestow every right of citizenship. Now, after we have received the price, paid, as it was, in blood, shall we dare repudiate the promise recorded alike in the Book of God and in the memory of man, and not only withhold the essential rights of freemen, but restore to the rebel master property and place and power, and then hand back the slave, whom we swore to deliver, to be the victim of that master's passionate revenge?

We cannot do this without corrupting the heart of the nation. We cannot do it without bringing upon us the scorn and execration of the world. We cannot do it without compelling God to avenge the outrage.

It would be to perpetuate a wrong, blacker, fouler, more cowardly than slavery itself. It would prove us unworthy to be a nation. We should forfeit our right to be.

We should thank God that he has put our free institutions on trial before the world, and brought that trial to such a glorious issue.

Must we not believe that it was with a great purpose in view, reaching far beyond ourselves, that He drew upon us the attention of the nations, so that they became deeply interested spectators of the manner in which the Great Republic could bear the terrible ordeal?

The joy which thrilled through the leading powers of Western Europe when they thought our destruction sure, shows the extent of our influence, and how important it was that the

question of our stability should be settled so that none could doubt.

Therefore it was that God subjected us to the peril and strain of the most dangerous conspiracy and the most formidable civil war the world had known. He increased our peril and our difficulties by permitting thousands of traitors in our very midst, who, by every possible method, were giving aid and comfort to the South, and He brought all this upon us when we were stripped and disarmed, with no army or navy, or money or credit. He called the nations to look at what they thought a dissolving Union, the broken fragments of a nation, and then He suddenly revealed the astonishing life-power of our free institutions.

The Union was not sundered. It was an insurrection confronted by the regular Government. Instead of dissolving into a mob we were compacted into a nation. A peaceful and peace-loving people were transformed into the foremost military power on earth. Instead of any distrust or desertion of the Government, there was a steady enthusiastic loyalty which over-awed the traitors at home, and astonished all our foes.

We raised such an army as the world had not seen; we created a navy equal to the foremost; we furnished three thousand millions to carry on the war; we fed, and clothed, and armed our soldiers and sailors in a manner hitherto unknown; we followed them with the teachings and consolations of religion; we sent to camp and field the comforts and cherishing sympathies of home. Instead of national poverty and universal bankruptcy, the Government provided a national currency adequate to our wants, and with which the people are satisfied. We have kept every department of our industry moving prosperously on, and we fought the battle through, and fought down the rebellion, and showed to the nations our one national flag floating again over every foot of our territory. We showed them four millions of slaves transformed into freemen; and as if all this was not enough, God permitted our loved and honored chief to be foully murdered, to show that a free republic could endure even that. We sorrowed as no nation ever grieved before; but we turned calmly and trustingly to place the power in the hands of his worthy successor. The loyalty, the sympathies, the hopes, the prayers of the nation were centred upon him, and with no pause, or jar, or fear, we moved on as steadily as before to accomplish our mission.

It was the grandest vindication of free institutions, the resistless might of free intelligence, the world has seen. God meant it to be that, and Europe is a hundred years nearer deliverance than when our war begun.

We should thank God that a new nation has been born—a nation that embodies now the spirit of the Gospel.

Before the war we had no definite and well-compacted political structure. Instead of one grand nationality, there was a loose aggregation of States, scarcely united by the tie of an indefinite General Government. Instead of one mighty national life, there was only an association of weak State lives, jealous of, and contending with, each other.

It is far otherwise now. We are a nation, with great national aspirations, hopes, and powers. We have been fused into an inseparable unity by the fierce heat of battle, and consecrated to our national work by the baptism of blood and tears. The guns at Sumter awoke in us a national spirit, we rallied to a national flag; we exalted the national authority; we created an army and navy not of the States, but of the nation; we have now a national history, a national name and standing; we are capable now of national art and a national literature, and henceforth we shall live a national life.

Before the war the United States, as a political organization, had no definite religious character or purpose. But now the power which moves us and through which we have conquered is a religious sentiment, and that has also assumed a definite form. I refer now to what seems to be the dominant, leading religious sentiment of the land. It is a Christianity which recognizes the manhood of all men, which demands for all men equality of right before God and the law, and a fair field in which every one may work out for himself a social standing according to the faculty which is in him.

This is now the central idea of the living aggressive American Christianity, and the nation stands committed to its propagation and defence. The term Protestantism does not correctly describe this form of Christianity. It is more than Protestantism; it is a step in advance.

It embraces and holds fast all the great Protestant doctrines; but it also does more than this. The power of the Reformation consisted in presenting anew some of the cardinal doctrines of the ancient faith. American Christianity accepts all these, and then goes beyon

and embodies the principles of the Gospel in free popular institutions, and in the very spirit of Christ proposes to ennoble the whole humanity.

The American nation then occupies a position never held by any people before. It stands the representative and champion of a true *Christian* democracy in Church and State, and demands this continent, and nothing less, as the theatre of its life. It opens a new era in the progress of humanity.

If these views are correct, then we may look for the future safety of our country in this newborn and intenser Christian life, embodied now in national institutions; so that although there will be no State religion, no Church in alliance with civil government, there will be an American Christianity, which will control our national policy as the spirit does the body. As the spirit is present in every member and fibre of the body, so let us hope that American Christianity will pervade the whole body of our institutions, and shape every act of our policy. In the presence of such a Christianity, living, active and applied as God's rule of action to all of life, private or public, individual or social, no great iniquity can flourish, no great wrong can perpetuate itself. Before the bar of public opinion thus formed, four millions could not long plead in vain for just and blood-bought rights; and on such a nation the baptism of God's blessing would descend as brightly as the sunbeams and gently as the dews.

We stand before the world on the threshold of this new era the mightiest Christian nation of earth; not through our army and navy, powerful as they are, but through the thinking power which is created by general education; by the might of freedom which expands humanity to its proper proportions; by the living energies of a free Gospel, through which the life-power is working; mighty through the stern teachings of war and the holier discipline of sorrow, with a national life strong enough to control a continent, and which will brook no fetter or dictation from a foreign power. I cannot but think that the very form of our North American continent is indicative of the design of God in our national mission. If we study its map, and follow its boundaries northward from the Isthmus along either ocean to the polar snows; if we observe its mountain chains, its rivers and lakes, and its central valleys, and then the adjacent islands, we see that unity is stamped on every feature.

It seems to have been constructed, not to be occupied by several independent States, but to be the theatre of one undivided national power. Nothing now is more certain than that the central, dominant life of the continent will absorb all else.

Thus far, it has crushed whatever opposed it, and it will not be rolled back, nor even checked now by a throne brought over from Europe and placed across the line of its march.

In its vigorous expansion it will carry its institutions and its authority to the utmost bound of the continent. Is it not, then, our national mission to fill this continent with the churches and schools, the activity and intelligence, and blessings of a civilization which is a true expression of the Gospel, and then, making no aggression, and permitting none from others, aid as we may in regenerating Europe by the example of a nation which honors Christ, and also honors humanity because redeemed and elevated in Him—the example of a Christian Continental Republic?

After the discourse, which was received with marked approbation, Rev. Mr. Morris offered the closing prayer, in which thanks were rendered to God for the great deliverance which had been, through the wonderful Providence of God, wrought out for the nation, and supplications offered for the reconstruction of the States upon the basis of impartial justice and liberty, and for national fraternity and love among all sections of the consolidated Union.

The doxology—

> Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
> Praise Him, all creatures here below;
> Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
> Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.—

was then sung, and the benediction pronounced.

At the conclusion of the services, Hon. James M. Ashley, Member of Congress from Ohio, who, as leader, had so successfully carried through the House of Representatives on the 31st of January, 1865, the Constitutional Amendment abolishing slavery forever in every part of the United States, (which amendment has been ratified already by twenty-seven States, and so becomes an organic law,) rose and moved that Dr. Boynton be requested to furnish a copy of his discourse for publication, which was unanimously carried.

Eight thousand copies of the discourse, and services of Thanksgiving Day in the Capitol, were subscribed for by members of Congress and others; and one of the leading journals of Washington city, and another in Cincinnati, published the sermon in full.

This was the first Thanksgiving service ever held in the Halls of Congress, and its Christian and national character was in harmony with the precedents and practices of the Fathers of the Republic, and with the genius and precepts of the Christian religion on which the nation was founded, and by which it has grown to its present prosperity and greatness.

REFERENCES TO NATIONAL THANKSGIVINGS.

The first National Thanksgiving was appointed by the Continental Congress on Thursday, the 18th of December, 1777, that prayer and praise might be offered "that under the providence of Almighty God these United States may receive the greatest of all blessings—independence and peace, &c." —*Journals of Congress*, 1777.

The second was celebrated on Wednesday, the 30th of December, 1778, to render thanks that it had pleased God "to support us in a just and necessary war for the defence of out rights and liberties, &c."—*Journals of Congress*, 1778.

The third was celebrated on Thursday, the 9th day of December, 1779, "for God's favor and protection to these United States, and to pray that he would establish their independence upon the basis of religion and virtue, &c."—*Journals of Congress*, 1779.

The fourth was appointed on Thursday, the 7th day of December, 1780, "that God would favor our joint councils and exertions for the establishment of speedy and permanent peace, and cause the blessings of Christianity to spread over the earth," &c.—*Journals of Congress*, 1780.

The fifth was observed on the 13th day of December, 1781, and prayer offered that God "would favor the exertions of the United States for the speedy establishment of a safe, honorable and lasting peace."—*Journals of Congress*, 1781.

The sixth was celebrated on Thursday, the 28th day of November, 1782, "for the many instances of Divine goodness to these States in the course of the important conflict in which they have been so long engaged; and that all ranks may testify their gratitude to God for his goodness by a cheerful obedience to his laws, and the practice of pure and undefiled religion, which is the great foundation of public prosperity and national happiness," &c.—*Journals of Congress*, 1782.

The seventh was observed on the second Thursday of December, 1783; with grateful hearts "that God hath been pleased to conduct us in safety through all the vicissitudes of the war; and that he hath given us unanimity and resolution to adhere to our just rights; that in the course of the present year hostilities have ceased, and we are left in the undisputed possession of our liberty and independence," &c.—*Journals of Congress*, 1783.

The eighth was celebrated on Tuesday, the 19th day of October, 1787, for the exchange of the instruments of ratification of the definite treaty of peace between the United States of America and his Britannic Majesty, and the happy completion of the great work of independence, freedom and peace to the United States," &c.—*Journals of Congress*, 1787.

The ninth was appointed after the adoption of the present Constitution, by President Washington, at the request of Congress, to be observed on Thursday, the 26th day of November, 1789, in solemn acts of prayer and praise "for the signal and great mercies of God, and the favorable interpositions of His providence, in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the peaceable and national manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of governments for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted."—*Journals of Congress*, 1789.

The tenth was appointed by President Washington, without special authority from Congress, to be observed on Thursday, the 19th of February, 1795, "by sincere and hearty thanks to the great Ruler of the Universe for the manifold and signal mercies which distinguish our

lot as a nation; *particularly for the possession of constitutions of government which unite and, by their union, establish liberty with order; for the seasonable control which has been given to a spirit of disorder in the suppression of the late insurrection," &c.*

The eleventh was appointed on Thursday, the 3d of April, 1815, on account of the conclusion of peace between the United States and Great Britain. The joint resolution was passed on the same day on which the official notification of peace was received by Congress, and President Madison issued his proclamation on the 4th of March, 1815, in which he recommends "the people of the United States to observe the day with religious solemnity, and by devout acknowledgments to Almighty God for His great goodness, manifested in restoring to them the blessings of peace."—*Journals of Congress*, 1815.

The twelfth was appointed by President Lincoln, without special authority from Congress, to be observed on Thursday, the 6th of August, 1863, "that it had pleased Almighty God to hearken unto the supplications and prayers of an afflicted people, and to vouchsafe to the army and navy of the United States victories on the land and on the sea, so signal and so effective as to furnish reasonable grounds for augmented confidence that the Union of these States will be maintained, their constitutions preserved, and their peace and prosperity permanently restored," &c.

President Lincoln, after the fall of Richmond and the surrender of the principal army of the rebellious States, said to his assembled countrymen, met on the evening of the 11th of April, 1865, before the Executive mansion, "a call for a national Thanksgiving is being prepared, and will be duly promulgated." His assassination on the evening of the 14th of April, prevented the consummation of his purpose.

President Johnson, without a special request from Congress, appointed the thirteenth national Thanksgiving, on Thursday, the 7th day of December, 1865, and his proclamation is among the records of the services in the Capitol on that day.

Days for fasting and prayer were appointed by Congress during the revolution, as follows, viz: Thursday, July 26, 1775, by resolution of June 12; Friday, May 17, 1776, by resolution of March 16; December 11, 1776, day to be fixed by the several States; Wednesday, April 22, 1778, by resolution of March 26; Wednesday, April 22, 1780, by resolution of March 11; Thursday, May 3, 1781, by resolution of March 20; Thursday, April 25, by resolution of March 19.

Under the elder Adams' Administration, without special authority from Congress, a fast day was appointed on May 9, 1798, by a proclamation dated March 28, 1798; and a second fast day, under the same administration, was appointed, without special authority from Congress, on Thursday, the 28th of April, 1799, by proclamation, dated March 6, 1799.

President John Tyler issued "a recommendation, dated April 13, 1841, to the people of the United States," to observe Friday, May 14, 1841, as a day of fasting and prayer, on account of the death of William Henry Harrison, the late President of the United States, who died March 7, 1841.

President Taylor, without authority from Congress, issued a "recommendation" for a national fast, to be observed on the first Friday in August, 1849, on account of the providence of God, which had manifested itself in the visitation of a fearful pestilence," the Asiatic cholera.

President Buchanan, without authority from Congress, issued his proclamation, December 14, 1861, appointing Friday, 4th of January, 1861, "to be kept as a solemn fast," in view of the present distracted and dangerous condition of the country.

President Lincoln, by special request from Congress, appointed the last Thursday of September, 1861, "as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer for all the people of the nation," and said, "it is peculiarly fit for us to recognize the hand of God in the visitation of civil war, and in sorrowful remembrances of our own faults and crimes as a nation, and as individuals to humble ourselves before Him, and to pray for His mercy," &c.

President Lincoln, also, by special request of a concurrent resolution of Congress, passed July 2, 1864, appointed the first Thursday of August, 1864, to pray "that if consistent with God's will, the existing rebellion may be speedily suppressed, and the supremacy of the Constitution and laws of the United States may be established throughout all the States; to implore Him as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, not to destroy us as a people, nor suffer us to be destroyed by the workings or consi-

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vance of other nations, or by obstinate adhesion to our own counsels which may be in conflict with His eternal purposes, and to implore Him to enlighten the mind of the nation to know and do His will," &c.

President Andrew Johnson, who succeeded to the Presidency on the death of President Lincoln, appointed Thursday, the 25th day of May, 1865, as a day of humiliation and mourning before Almighty God, in order that the bereavement may be sanctified to the nation;" and "that all may be occupied at the same time in contemplation of the virtues of the late President, and in sorrow for his sudden and violent death."

Colonial Thanksgivings and Fasts were frequently observed by the New England and other Colonies on important occasions, and most of the States in the Union during the last quarter of a century have celebrated annually by official authority, the festival of Thanksgiving. They originated in the piety and faith of the Puritans, and, through them, have become State and national in their character, and belong peculiarly to American ideas and institutions. They were celebrated for the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and for social and civil blessings conferred by the favoring providence of God. Their observance exerts a benificent influence on the culture of the best affections of the human heart, and on the three great organic institutions of God—the Family, the Church and the State—and the official papers of their appointments constitute a rich and important part of the Christian and political annals of our national and State governments.

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